

Creating a Culture of Food Safety

“It has been said, what we know and what we believe is of little consequence. It is what we do that is important. When it comes to food safety, this point is certainly true.” - Frank Yiannas, author of the book, *Food Safety Culture, Creating a Behavior-Based Food Safety Management System*.

A Culture of Food Safety

What does a culture of food safety mean? Think of it as your school community’s behaviors and beliefs about food safety. You will have a culture of food safety when food-safe behaviors are *second nature* to the members of your school community – your school nutrition team, school administrators, teachers, parents, and students – and these behaviors are *consistently* practiced to help keep students healthy and safe.

Creating Your Culture

Basing your food safety efforts on sound science lays the foundation for a culture of food safety. You must know not only which practices are important to keep food safe (e.g., temperature control of food), but also why these practices are critical (e.g., food held out of temperature can grow microbes that can make your students sick). Developing plans, policies, and procedures will be an important part of building food-safe schools. They will establish expectations

and standards and create a food safety blueprint for the entire school community. The action steps and resources in the Action Sheets in Part 2 will lead you in developing these plans, policies, and procedures. Some resources will also provide insight into the roles other members of the school community play in these efforts.

So, you have developed plans, policies, and procedures to address food safety issues – now what? Have these measures made a significant impact on the safety of food within your school community? Remember, it is often *what we do* that is important. How are you helping *all* members of your school community change their behaviors and make food safety second nature to their daily activities? As the school district’s expert in food safety, you should consider these questions and take on a leadership role.

Leading a culture of food safety means more than managing food safety practices. It calls for you to use established and innovative approaches to communicate and partner with various groups to weave those food safety practices into day-to-day school activities. The communication strategies in Part 3 offer guidance on approaching and engaging these groups.